was possible to replace for a time a great deal of our imports by supplies produced at home, from the woods and forests of Britain and France.

Hitherto the timber of Great Britain had been a very badly neglected asset. At the outbreak of the War, Britain had a smaller proportion of *Pre-War forestry* in Europe except Portugal; and the output of our three million acres of woodland was about one-third of what it should have been under efficient management. A beginning had been made with the scientific development of afforestation by the Development Commissioners under the Development and Road Improvement Funds Act, which I carried in 1909, but there had been little time before the War for the Commissioners to achieve anything definite in a matter such as afforestation, where time is counted not in years but in decades. Just before the War the annual felling of British timber was estimated to amount to about 45,000,000 cubic feet—nearly one million loads—while our imports in 1913 were 10.4 million loads.

Timber requirements of industry and commerce

The timber was required for a variety of indispensable uses. Nearly three million loads consisted of pit-props and pit-wood for use in the coal-mines, A very large quantity was needed for building. Furniture took up a great deal of the imported soft wood was used for making boxes,

packing-cases and crates for the dispatch and distribution of manufactured goods.

With the advent of war, the demand for timber grew considerably. Manufacture of armaments and munitions made an increased demand for coal, and so for pit-props. The swelling torrent of supplies which